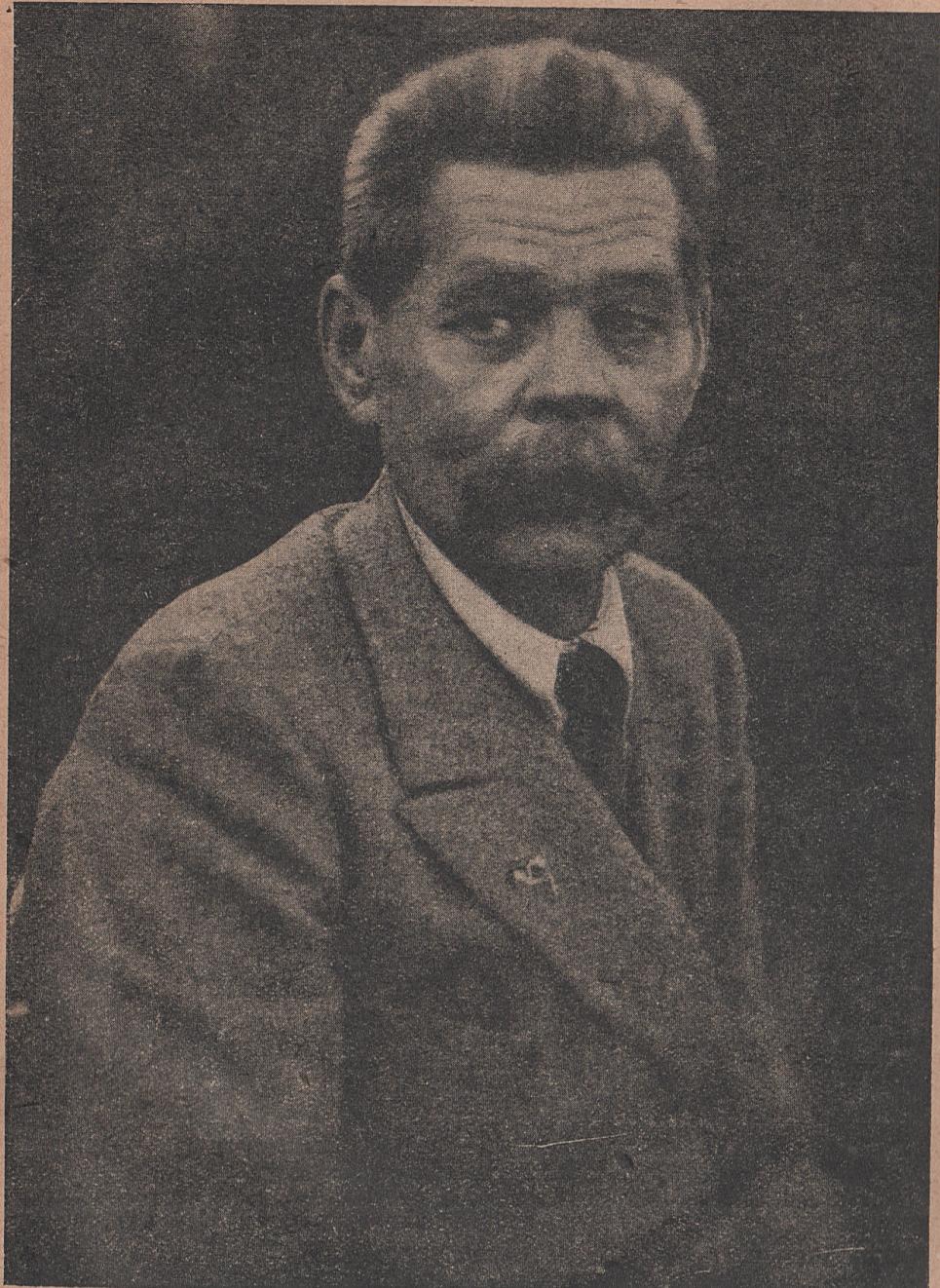


M. GORKY

ON
WHICH SIDE
ARE YOU,
"MASTERS
OF
CULTURE"



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ON WHICH SIDE ARE YOU, "MASTERS OF CULTURE?"

(Reply to American correspondents)

Pravda, March 22, 1932, No. 81 (5246)*

You write: "You will probably be surprised to receive this message from unknown people from beyond the seas." No, your letter did not surprise me. I get such letters quite frequently and you are mistaken in saying that your message is a "singular" one, for during the last two or three years, the alarmed appeals from intellectuals have become quite an everyday occurrence. This is quite natural. The function of the intelligentsia has always been confined, in the main, to embellishing the bored existence of the bourgeoisie, to consoling the rich in the trivial troubles of their life. The intelligentsia was the nurse of the capitalist class. It was kept busy patching up with white stitches the philosophical and ecclesiastical vestments of the bourgeoisie—that old and filthy fabric, besmeared so thickly with the blood of the toiling masses. They continue this difficult, but not very praiseworthy and absolutely futile occupation even now though they have manifested an almost prophetic clairvoyance of the forthcoming events. For instance, before the imperialists proceeded to the partition of

*) Owing to the fact that the original communication to which this is a reply was not available to the publishers, the extracts from the communication quoted here have been retranslated from the Russian as given by Gorky in *Pravda*.—The Publishers.

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China, a German named Spengler, in his book *Man and Technique*, wrote that a mistake was made by the Europeans in the nineteenth century in imparting their technical knowledge to the "coloured races." In this respect Spengler is supported by your American historian, Hendrick Van Loon, who is also of the opinion that the arming of black and yellow human beings with the experience of European culture was one of the "seven fatal historical mistakes" committed by the European bourgeoisie.

At the present time we can observe an anxiety to rectify this mistake. The capitalists of Europe and of the United States of America are supplying the Japanese and Chinese with money and munitions, helping them to destroy each other, and at the same time they dispatch their navies to the East in order to be able to shake their mighty armed fist in the face of Japanese imperialism at the most opportune moment, so that, when the bear has been killed, they may proceed to divide his hide among themselves, giving the brave hare his portion too. I, personally, am of the opinion that the bear will not be killed, for Spengler, Van Loon and other comforters of the bourgeoisie who argue a great deal about the dangers threatening European and American "culture", forget to mention one thing. They forget that the Hindus, Japanese and Chinese are not really a uniform entity, but are divided up into classes. They forget that against the poison of selfish philistine thought in Europe and America a salutary antidote has been compounded and is even now at work—the doctrines of Marx and Lenin. Perhaps, though, they do not really forget this; perhaps they are only hushing it up from tactical motives, their shouts of alarm about the threat to European culture being explained by the fact that they know how impotent is the poison and how potent the antidote.

The number of those who wail about the doom of civilisation is growing more and more. Their shouts are becoming louder and louder. Three months ago in France, the former

cabinet minister, Caillaux, was publicly screaming about the instability of civilisation. This is what he was screaming:

"The world is enduring a tragedy of surfeit and mutual distrust. Is it not a tragedy to be obliged to burn wheat and to throw sacks of coffee into the sea when millions of people lack food? And, as for the distrust among us—it has caused enough evil already. It provoked the war and dictated peace treaties, which can only be amended when this distrust disappears. If we do not succeed in re-establishing mutual confidence, the whole of civilisation will be in danger, for the various nations may be tempted to overthrow the economic system to which they attribute all their disasters."

To speak of the possibility of confidence between the looters, who in our times are openly showing their claws and teeth to each other, one must be either a rank hypocrite or an extremely naive person. And if the term "nation" is meant to denote the working people, every honest man must admit that the workers are quite right in "attributing" to the senselessness of the capitalist regime all the calamities, with which this regime rewards them for their work of creating value. The proletarians are seeing ever more clearly that the modern bourgeoisie is justifying with a horrifying exactitude the words of Marx and Engels, contained in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie is "unfit to rule because it is incompetent to provide security for its slaves even within the confines of their slavish existence; because it has no option but to let them lapse into a condition in which it has to feed them instead of being fed by them. Society cannot continue to live under bourgeois rule. This means that the life of the bourgeoisie has become incompatible with the life of society."

Caillaux is one out of hundreds of those dotards who still continue to produce arguments proving that their bourgeois idiocy is a sort of wisdom given to humanity for ever and ever, that mankind will never invent anything better, will never rise above it or go beyond it. And it was not so very long ago

that these comforters of the bourgeoisie were trying to prove their economic wisdom, trying to prove that it would hold good for ever and boasting of their science.

Now they are beginning to exclude science from their dirty business. This same Caillaux speaking in Paris on February 23, before an audience of former cabinet ministers like Paul Miliukov and other *ci-devant* persons, followed the same line of argument as had been laid down by Spengler:

"Technique is everywhere creating unemployment, converting the wages of discharged workers into the surplus dividends of the shareholders. Science 'without conscience,' not warmed by 'conscience,' is detrimental to mankind. Mankind must bridle science. The present crisis is a defeat for the human intelligence. There can sometimes be no greater misfortune for science than a great man. He puts forward theoretical theses which possess great significance and importance at the time when these theses are made. They are right, as for instance the theses of Karl Marx were right in 1848 or 1870, but absolutely wrong for 1932. Had Marx been alive at present, he would have written differently."

By these words, the bourgeois admits that the intelligence of his class is impotent, insolvent. He wants to "bride science" forgetting how much power science has given his class to strengthen its authority over the world of toilers. "To bridle science"—what does this phrase mean? To forbid science its freedom to explore. There was a time when the bourgeoisie was fighting both valiantly and successfully against the attempts of the church to violate this freedom of science. In our days bourgeois philosophy is gradually becoming what it was in the darker years of the middle ages—the servant of theology. Caillaux is quite right in saying that Europe is threatened by a reversion to barbarism, as foretold by Marx about whose teachings he knows nothing. Yes, it is an indisputable fact that the bourgeoisie of Europe and America now mistress of the world, is every year becoming more ignorant, more weak

intellectually, more barbarous. It is beginning to grasp this fact itself—in your person, M. Caillaux.

The idea of a possible reversion to the epoch of barbarism is now "quite the fashion" among the modern bourgeoisie. The Spenglers, the Caillauxs and other "thinkers" of this type reflect the feelings of thousands of petty bourgeois—feelings of alarm, provoked by the presentment of class peril, by the fact of the growing revolutionary consciousness of the working masses throughout the world. The bourgeoisie would prefer not to believe in the process of cultural revolutionary development which the workers are undergoing, but it cannot help seeing it and sensing it. This process is borne out by evidence from all quarters. It is the logically inevitable development of the entire working experience of humanity, that experience of which the bourgeois historians used to tell so instructively. But history, being also a science, needs "bridling" too, or—a still plainer expedient—it needs to have its existence forgotten or ignored. To forget history—such is the advice of a French poet and academician, Paul Valery, in his book *Review of Modern Times*. It is history that he quite seriously accuses of all our misfortunes, saying that, by recalling the past, history arouses futile dreams and deprives men of rest. By "men" we are of course to understand "the bourgeoisie." Paul Valery is probably incapable of noticing any other men on the face of the earth. This is what he says about history—a science of which the bourgeoisie was so proud until recently, and which has been so skilfully written by it:

"History is the most dangerous of all the products of the chemical laboratory of our mind. It stimulates dreaming, it intoxicates the nations, it generates in them false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, irritates their old wounds, deprives them of peace and infects them with megalomania or persecution mania."

As you see, he takes his duties as comforter in a very radical spirit. He knows that the bourgeoisie wants to live peacefully, that for the sake of a quiet life it thinks itself justified in

destroying tens of millions of human lives. It can, of course, equally well destroy several tens of thousands of books—libraries, like everything else, are in its hands. Exclude all historical works from circulation. Stop teaching history in schools. Proclaim that the study of the past is a dangerous and even criminal pursuit. Men who have an inclination to study history should be treated as insane and deported to uninhabited islands.

The main thing is quiet! This is the first thought in the minds of the comforters of the bourgeoisie. But, according to Caillaux, quiet requires the establishment of mutual confidence among the national-capitalist brigands; and in order to establish such confidence, some far away country—China, for instance, must be opened up for plunder by all the freebooters and shopkeepers of Europe, whereas the shopkeepers and freebooters of Japan want to close the doors of this country to everybody except themselves: and they are doing it on the grounds that China is nearer to them than to Europe, and that it is more convenient for them to plunder China than to plunder the Hindus, it being the habit of the "gentlemen" of England to plunder the Hindus. Out of the competition which this plunder involves, arise disputes which are threatening us with the danger of a new world slaughter. And furthermore, in the words of the Paris journalist Grengoire, "the Russian Empire, as a normal and sound market, is lost to Europe." Grengoire sees therein the "source of all evil," and together with numerous other journalists, politicians, bishops, lords, adventurers and sharks, insists upon the necessity of a pan-European intervention against the Union of the Soviets. Then unemployment in Europe is constantly increasing, and with it the class-consciousness of the proletariat is growing too. There is really very little chance of establishing quiet; it would even seem that there is no place for quiet. I am no optimist, and being aware that the cynicism of the bourgeoisie is unlimited, can find only one way of which the bourgeoisie might avail itself in order to establish a haven of repose for itself. This way was hinted

at on February 19 by the "nordic" deputy Berger in Cologne. In his speech he said:

"If after Hitler's coming into power the French make an attempt to occupy German territory, we will massacre all the Jews."

Having learned of Berger's declaration, the Prussian government has forbidden him to speak again in public. This prohibition excited the indignation of Hitler's followers. One "nordic" newspaper writes: "Berger cannot be accused of incitement to any illicit action; we will slaughter the Jews on the basis of a law which we shall pass after coming into power."

This declaration should not be looked upon as a joke, as a German "Witz;" the European bourgeoisie in its present state of mind is quite capable of passing such a law for the wholesale extermination not only of Jews, but also of all those who think differently from itself and, in the first instance, of all those who do not act in accordance with its own inhuman interests.

* * *

The comforters from among the intelligentsia, confined within this "vicious circle," are gradually losing their skill in offering comfort, and are in need of comfort themselves. They are asking for it even from people who are opposed in principle to giving charity (for fear of establishing a precedent). Their gift of seductive lying—their chief gift—is no more able to gloss over the filthy cynicism of bourgeois reality. Some of them are beginning to feel that the entertainment and consolidation of people, who are weary of plundering the world and are worried by the ever growing resistance of the proletariat to their infamous designs—people in whom the thirst for profit has taken on violent, mad and socially destructive forms,—that to console and to entertain such people is becoming not only futile but even dangerous for the consolers themselves.

It would not be amiss to point out how criminal it is to console the sorrows of robbers and cut-throats, but this will not really affect anybody, for this is a moral, *i.e.*, something excluded from real life on account of its uselessness. It is much more essential to point out the fact that in the world of today the consoling intellectual has become that "third factor" whose existence is denied by logic.

Bourgeois by his origin but a proletarian in his social standing, he seems to grasp how degrading is the part he is playing in the service of a class which is doomed to ruin and fully deserves this ruin, as ruin is deserved by any professional bandit or murderer. He begins to grasp this because the bourgeois is no longer in need of his services. He hears more and more frequently how people of his own sort are trying to please the bourgeoisie by screaming about the overproduction of intellectuals. He sees how the bourgeoisie turns for "consolation" to charlatans who claim to foretell the future, rather than to philosophers and "thinkers." The newspapers of Europe are full of advertisements of palmists, astrologers with their horoscopes, fakirs, clairvoyants, spiritualists and other quacks even more ignorant than the bourgeoisie itself. The camera and the cinema are killing art, and painters in order to avoid starvation, are bartering their pictures in exchange for bread, for potatoes or for the old clothes of the bourgeoisie. The following cheerful item appeared in one of the Paris newspapers:

"There is great distress prevailing among the painters of Berlin; not a ray of hope is to be seen. Rumours are heard about the organisation of mutual aid among the painters, but what mutual aid can be organised by people who earn nothing and have no prospect of earning anything? Artistic circles in Berlin therefore received with enthusiasm the original idea of Annot Jakoby, a lady-painter, who suggested a barter of goods. The coal merchants should supply the painters with fuel in exchange for statues and paintings. Times will change, and the coal merchants will not be the losers in such a transaction. The dentists will give the painters treatment. A good picture will never be superfluous in the waiting room of a dentist. Butchers and milkmen should jump at this opportunity of doing a good deed and at the

same time acquiring works of art without having to pay cash for them. A special bureau has been organised in Berlin for developing Annot Jakoby's idea and putting it into practice."

In speaking of this barter of goods, the paper omits to mention that it is already in existence in Paris.

The cinema has gradually destroyed the high art of the theatre. It is superfluous to speak of the corrupting influence of bourgeois movies. The fact is abundantly clear. Having exhausted all sentimental themes, it has now proceeded to exploit physical monstrosities.

"A special troupe has been got together in the Hollywood studio of Metro-Goldwin-Mayer to work for the film 'Freaks.' It consists of 'Cuckoo'—girl-bird bearing a great resemblance to a stork; P. Robinson, the human skeleton; Martha, born with one arm, a past-master in the art of knitting lace with her feet; Schiltze, a woman nicknamed "pin-head," a woman with a normal body, but an extraordinarily small head, resembling a pin; Olga, a woman with a large beard like a man; Josephine-Joseph, half woman, half man; the Siamese twins, the Gulton sisters, dwarfs and liliputians."

There is no room now for Barnaya, Pozzarti, Monet, Sully. They are being replaced by Fairbankses, Harold Lloyds and other tricksters, with the sentimental and dejected Charlie Chaplin at their head. In the same way classical music is being replaced by "jazz," while Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens and Flaubert are being ousted by such writers as Edgar Wallace, who know how to spin yarns of police sleuths protecting the property of the big plunderers and organisers of mass murders and catching the small thieves and murderers in their clutches. In the sphere of art the bourgeoisie is quite satisfied with collecting postage stamps and tramway tickets or at best collecting counterfeit pictures of old masters. In the sphere of science the bourgeoisie is interested in the ways and means by which the physical labour of the working class may be most cheaply and conveniently exploited, for bourgeois science exists only in so far as it is able to serve his objects of self-enrichment, to regulate the activity of his gastric-intestinal organism and to increase his sexual energy as a libertine. The basic problems

of science: intellectual development, improvement of the sanitary conditions of mankind ground down by the capitalist yoke, the conversion of inert matter into energy, the solution of the technique of the structure and growth of the human organism—all this is beyond the understanding of the bourgeois, and is of no more interest to him than to the savage of Central Africa.

Seeing all this, some of the intelligentsia begin to understand that the "creation of culture," which they were accustomed to consider as their business, as the result of their "free thought" and "independent will," is their business no more, and that culture is not at all an inner necessity of the capitalist world. The events in China recalled to them the destruction of the university and library of Louvain in 1914. Yesterday they heard of how the Japanese guns had destroyed the Tuntsi University in Shanghai, the nautical college, fishing school, national university, college of medicine, agricultural and engineering colleges and workers' university. This act of barbarity roused nobody's indignation, just as nobody is troubled by the reduction of grants in aid of cultural institutions, which goes on side by side with the continuous growth of armaments.

It goes without saying, of course, that only a certain and quite negligible part of the European-American intelligentsia has sensed the inevitability of its subjugation to "the law of exclusion of the third" and is debating the question of which way to go. Are they to go with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat—the usual path—or with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie—as honour demands? The majority of the intelligentsia continues to be satisfied with their task of serving capitalism, a master who, well knowing the moral flexibility of his servant and consoled and seeing the importance and futility of his conciliatory work, begins to despise his servant openly and is already beginning to doubt whether it is necessary for him to exist any longer.

I frequently receive letters from these specialists in the art of consoling the philistines. I will here quote one of these letters which I received from Mr. Sven Elverstad:

"Dear Mr. Gorky:

"Terrible perplexity, bordering on despair, is now prevailing everywhere, as a result of the terrible economic crisis which is now shaking all the countries of the world. This world tragedy prompted me to commence a series of articles in the most popular Norwegian newspaper, *Tidens Tagn*. The object of these articles is to raise the spirits and kindle the hopes of millions of victims of this terrible disaster. In pursuance of this object, I found myself obliged to apply to the representatives of literature, art, science and politics, requesting them to express their opinion with regard to the tragic position of the peoples during the last few years. Every citizen of every country is confronted with the problem: whether to perish under the heavy blows of cruel fate, or to continue struggling in the hopes of a happy issue to the crisis. This hope of a favourable outcome from the present hopeless situation is essential to everyone; it will bring a bright ray of hope to all who may read an optimistic opinion, expressed by a person to whom everyone is accustomed to listen with respect. This is why I take the liberty of asking you to send me your opinion of the present situation. This opinion should not exceed three-four lines, but it will no doubt save countless people from despair giving them strength to look forward bravely to the future.

Yours respectfully, *Sven Elverstad.*"

Men like the author of this letter, men who have not as yet lost their naive faith in the medicinal power of "two or

three lines," and in the sacred might of a phrase—such men are still to be found in plenty. Their faith is so ingenuous that it can hardly be genuine. Neither two or three, nor two hundred nor three hundred phrases will put life into the decrepit limbs of the bourgeoisie. Thousands of phrases are being uttered in all the parliaments of the world and in the League of Nations every day, but they fail to console or soothe anybody, or to inspire any hopes that the spontaneous growth of the crisis of bourgeois civilisation can possibly be arrested. Former cabinet ministers and other idlers are traveling from city to city trying to convince the bourgeoisie to "bridle" science and to "discipline" it. The babbling of these persons is immediately caught up by the journalists—men to whom "nothing matters, and everything has long ago become tiresome," and one of these men, Emil Ludwig, in a serious newspaper article published in the *Daily Express*, urges us to "kick out specialists." And the petty bourgeoisie listens to this advice, reads all this nonsense, and draws its own conclusions. And if the European bourgeoisie finds it necessary to close down its universities, there will be nothing wonderful in that. It will be able to refer to the fact that every year in Germany there are 6,000 openings to official posts, requiring university diplomas, whereas the yearly number of graduates from the German universities is 40,000.

Citizens D. Smith and T. Morrison, you are mistaken in saying that the role of bourgeois literature and journalism is to "organise cultural opinions." This "organiser" is a parasitic plant, attempting to cover the dirty chaos of reality, but covering it with less success than, for instance, the dirt and debris of a ruined building are covered by ivy and other similar weeds. You, citizens, are ill informed as to the cultural importance of your press, which proclaims unanimously that "An American is an American first and foremost," and only after that he is a man. The anti-alien press in Germany likewise teaches that a nordic is first and foremost an Aryan, and only

after that is he a physician, geologist or philosopher; the journalists of France are arguing that a Frenchman is first and foremost a victor, consequently he should be armed better than others—the question of course being not one of arming the brain, but merely of arming the fist.

It is no exaggeration to say that the press of Europe and America busies itself assiduously and almost exclusively with the task of lowering the cultural level of its readers, a level which is already sufficiently low. Serving the interests of their employers, the capitalists, past masters in the art of making mountains out of molehills, the journalists are by no means desirous of curbing the pig, though they certainly cannot help seeing that the pig has lost its senses and is beginning to run amuck.

You write: "With deep bitterness did we feel when we were in Europe, that the Europeans hate us." This is very "subjective," and subjectivism having allowed you to see a certain feature, obscured your vision of the general truth. You failed to observe that in Europe the entire bourgeoisie is living in an atmosphere of mutual hatred. The plundered Germans hate France, which, suffocating from a plethoric surfeit of gold, in turn hates the English, just as Italians hate the French, while the whole bourgeoisie is filled with unanimous hatred against the Union of the Soviets. 300 million Hindus are living in hatred of the English lords and shopkeepers, 450 million Chinese are hating not only the Japanese but also all Europeans, who, being accustomed to plunder China, are also ready to hate Japan, because it considers the right to plunder China as its own exclusive right. This all-enveloping cloud of hatred is growing denser. The hatred is becoming more virulent. It is swelling up in the bourgeois organism like some noxious abscess which of course, will eventually burst, so that the best and purest blood of the peoples of the whole globe may once again be poured out in streams. The war will destroy not only millions of strong men but a tremendous quantity of valuables and

of the raw materials from which these valuables are made, and all this will result in the impoverishment of mankind in health, in metals and in fuel. It goes without saying that the war will not obliterate the hatred between the various national groups of the bourgeoisie. You think yourself "capable of serving the common culture of mankind" and "obliged to defend it from declining into barbarity." This is all very well. But put before yourself, first, the simple question: What can you do today or tomorrow to protect this culture, which, by the way, has never been the "common culture of mankind" and can never be such while there are national-capitalist state organisations which are absolutely devoid of any responsibility to the toiling people, and which stir up the nations against each other.

Very well then, you must ask yourself what will you be able to oppose to the facts of unemployment, the exhaustion of the working class from starvation, the growth of child prostitution, that are destroying culture? Are you aware that the exhaustion of the masses means the exhaustion of the soil on which culture is grown? You are certainly aware that the so-called "cultural stratum" was produced by the masses. You should know it very well, for the Americans are in the habit of boasting that in the United States of America newspaper boys have risen to the post of president.

In recalling this to your memory, I only want to point out the cleverness of the boys, and not the talents of presidents—of the talents of the latter I know nothing.

There is also another question, which you ought to bear in mind: do you think it possible to make 450 million Chinese the slaves of European and American capital at a time when 300 million Hindus are already beginning to understand that the gods have not foredoomed them to play the part of English slaves? For, consider: several tens of thousands of plunderers and adventurers want to live forever in peace and quiet on the

labour of a billion workers. Is this a normal state of things? It has been so and it is so still, but have you the courage to assert that things should go on as they are at present? Plague used to be an almost normal occurrence in the middle ages, but plague is almost extinct now; its role on our planet has been taken up by the bourgeoisie, which poisons the whole coloured world, inoculating it with the profoundest hatred and contempt for the whole white race. Has it not occurred to you, defenders of culture, that capitalism is provoking racial wars?

* * *

You reproach me with "preaching hatred" and advise me to "propagate love." It would seem that you think me capable of preaching to the workers: Love the capitalists, for they are devouring your kith and kin, love them because they are wantonly destroying the treasures of your earth, love the men who waste your iron for the construction of guns to annihilate you, love the rascals at whose will your children are starving to death, love those who destroy you for the sake of their own peace and satiety, love the capitalist, for his church is holding you down in obscurity and ignorance.

Something of this kind is preached by the gospels and, recollecting this, you speak of "christianity" as a "lever of culture." You are a little belated in arguing thus. Honest people stopped speaking of the cultural influence of the "teaching of love and meekness" long ago. It is a little out of place, indeed quite impossible to speak of this influence in our days, when the christian bourgeoisie at home and in the colonies is preaching meekness and forcing the slaves to love it by means of "fire and sword"—means which it is applying more vigorously than ever, for as you are well aware, in our days the sword has been replaced by the bomb and the machine gun, and even by the "voice of god from heaven." One of the Paris papers writes:

"In their war with Afridi, the English have hit upon a new method which has given them a tremendous advantage. A group of insurgents was hiding in some fastness in the midst of inaccessible mountains. Suddenly a large aeroplane appeared above them at a great height. The Afridi seized their rifles. But the aeroplanes did not drop any bombs. It dropped words instead. A voice from heaven, persuading the insurgents in their native tongue to throw down the arms and to stop their senseless contest with the British Empire. And in many cases the insurgents, shaken by this voice from heaven, did indeed stop their struggle."

Thus a simple way was found to prove the existence of god, and to utilise his voice for the enslavement of simple savages. We may soon expect to hear the voice of god speaking somewhere above San Francisco or Washington, speaking in the English language, but with a Japanese accent.

You hold up to me as an example the "great men, the teachers of the church." It is strange that you should say this in earnest. We will not now discuss the question of how these great men of the church are made, for what end and from what materials. Let me only say that before putting your trust in these men, you should have first tested their reliability. In arguing the "cause of the church" you are manifesting that "American idealism" which can grow only on the soil of profound ignorance. In this case, and in relation to the history of the christian church, your ignorance may be explained by the fact that the inhabitants of the United States of America have never experienced in their own flesh and blood what a church really is. They have not learned to know it as an organisation of violence over the mind and conscience of mankind. They never experienced this with the force with which it was experienced by the population of Europe. You should have first made yourselves acquainted with the bloody strife which took place at the oecumenical councils, with the fanaticism, ambition and selfishness of the "great teachers of the church." You would have benefited greatly by studying the history of the council in Ephesus. You should have read something about the history of heresies in order to become acquainted with the

extermination of "heretics" in the first centuries of christianity, with the massacres of Jews, the extermination of Albigenses and Taborites, and with the whole bloody policy of the church of Christ. The history of the inquisition is also of some interest to semi-illiterate people, but not, of course, in the way it is told by your countryman Washington Lee, whose description is approved by the censorial department of the Vatican, the organiser of the inquisition. It is quite possible that, having got acquainted with all the above, you would become convinced that the fathers of the church were jealously doing their best to strengthen the power of the minority over the majority, and that if they fought against heresies, it was because these heresies took their rise from among the mass of toiling people, who instinctively felt the falseness of the churchmen, these preachers of a religion for slaves, a religion which was never accepted by the masters except through some misunderstanding, or in a fit of panic before the slaves. Your historian Van Loon in his article on the *Great Historical Errors* asserts that the church should have fought not for the teachings of the gospel, but against them. He says:

"Titus committed a great error in his time in destroying Jerusalem. Driven out of Palestine, the Jews were dispersed all over the world. And the communities which they created developed and matured the idea of christianity, which proved no less ruinous to the Roman Empire than the ideas of Marx and Lenin to capitalist states."

Such was indeed the case, and the same is true today. The christian church has been fighting against the naive communism of the gospel, and its whole "history" can be reduced to this fact.

What is the church doing in our day? It is, of course, praying—in the first place. The archbishops of York and of Canterbury, one of whom was preaching something like a "crusade" against the Soviet Union, have concocted a new prayer, in which English hypocrisy is excellently blended with English humour. It is a very long composition, drawn up in

the same form as the "Lord's Prayer." The bishops are calling to God:

In the policy of our Government for the restoration of credit and prosperity;

Thy Will be done.

In all that is done for the settlement of the future government of India;

Thy Will be done.

In the coming Conference on Disarmament, and in all that is planned for the promotion of Peace;

Thy Will be done.

By the restoration of commerce in the confidence of restored credit and of mutual good-will;

Give us our daily bread.

By the co-operation of all classes in labour for the common good;

Give us our daily bread.

Because we have indulged in national arrogance, finding satisfaction in our power over others rather than in our ability to serve them;

Forgive us our trespasses.

Because we have been selfish in our conduct of business, setting our own interest or that of our own class before the interest of others;

Forgive us our trespasses.

This is a typical prayer of frightened shopkeepers! Throughout the entire prayer they keep asking their god dozens of times to "forgive them" their "trespasses," but forget to mention that they might just as well stop committing these "trespasses." And only in one case do they ask "forgiveness" of their god.

"Because we have indulged in national arrogance, finding satisfaction in our power over others rather than in our ability to serve them—*Forgive us our trespasses.*"

Forgive us this sin, but we cannot stop sinning—this is what they are saying. But the majority of English priests have rejected this prayer of forgiveness; probably they found it awkward and humiliating.

This prayer was "raised" to the throne of the English god on January 2 in St. Paul's Cathedral, London. The Archbishop of Canterbury allowed all priests who did not relish this prayer, to omit it.

So you see to what silly and trivial comedies the Christian church has descended, and how ridiculously the priests have reduced their god to the position of some senior shopkeeper, a partner in all the commercial dealings of the best shopkeepers in Europe. But it would not be fair to speak of English priests alone, omitting to mention that the Italian priests have organised the Bank of Holy Ghost, while in France the newspaper of the Russian emigrants in Paris publishes the following interesting item:

"The authorities have ordered the arrest of the manager and salesman of the bookstore of the catholic publishing house 'Union.' The bookstore was selling pornographic photographs and books imported from Germany. The "stock" has been confiscated. The contents of some of the books were not only pornographic, but were pouring filth on religion."

Hundreds of facts of a similar kind could be cited and they all go to prove the same thing: the church, which is the servant of its boss and tutor, capitalism, is infected with all the diseases which are destroying the latter. And if we admit that there was a time when the bourgeoisie "held the moral authority of the church in some respect," we must also admit, that it was the authority of the "spiritual police," the authority of one of its organisations, which served to oppress the toiling people. Did the church "console?" I don't deny that it did. But consolation is also one way of quenching the intelligence.

No, to preach to the poor that they should love the rich, and to the employee that he should love his employer, is no business of mine. I have no gift for consolation. I have known

too long and too well that the whole world is living in an atmosphere of hatred, and I can see that this atmosphere is daily growing denser, and therefore more salutary.

You, "humanitarians who want to be practical men," should have understood long ago that there are two forms of hatred at work in the world: one form has sprung up among the plunderers because of their competition with each other, and because of their apprehensions for the future, which threatens them with inevitable ruin; the other is the hatred of the proletariat, which originates in its disgust with things as they are, and which is daily becoming more clearly defined because the proletariat realises that it has the right to power. And nothing and nobody can reconcile these two hatreds, so strong have they now grown—nothing and nobody save the inevitable physical clash of the representatives of these two classes—nothing save the victory of the proletariat will be able to rid the world of hatred.

You write: "Like many others, we are of the opinion that in your country the dictatorship of the workers results in violence to the peasants." I want to give you a piece of advice. Just try to think, not like the "many others," but like those members of intelligentsia as yet very few in number who are beginning to understand that the theory of Marx and Lenin is the highest pinnacle yet reached by scientific thought, honestly investigating all social phenomena, and that only from the heights of this theory may the straight road leading towards social justice and new forms of culture be clearly seen. Make a certain mental effort and try to forget, if only momentarily, your kinship to that class whose whole history has been and still is a history of continual physical and moral violence inflicted on the masses of toiling humanity, on the workers and the peasants. Make this effort and you will understand that your class is your enemy. Karl Marx was a very wise man, but it should not be imagined that he came into the world as Minerva sprang out of the head of Jupiter. No, his theory is

another case of genius perfecting a scientific experiment, as were also the theories of Newton and Darwin in their day. Lenin is much plainer than Marx, and not less wise as a teacher. These two teachers will first show you the class which you are serving, in all its power and glory. They will demonstrate to you how this class by means of inhuman violence built up the "culture" most suitable for its purposes on a basis of blood, hypocrisy and lies. And then they will show you the process by which this culture decays, and further the process of its present decomposition which you can witness for yourselves. Why, it was this very process that inspired you with alarm, as expressed in your letter to me.

Let us discuss the subject of "violence." The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a temporary phenomenon, which is indispensable for the re-education of tens of millions of people who were formerly the slaves of nature and of the bourgeois state and to make them the sole masters of their country and of its vast resources. Dictatorship of the proletariat will cease to be a necessity as soon as the whole toiling people and the entire peasantry are placed on an equal footing in the social and economic sense and as soon as each member of society has the chance of working according to his ability and receiving according to his needs. "Violence," as you and "many others" understand it, represents a misunderstanding, but more often it is a lie and a libel on the working class of the Soviet Union and its Party. The term "violence" is applied to a social process now taking place in the Soviet Union, by the enemies of the working class for the purpose of slandering its cultural activity—an activity which involves the restoration of its country, and the organisation of new forms of economy.

In my opinion, it is possible to speak of compulsion, which is a very different thing from violence, for in teaching children to read and write you do not use any violence. The working class of the Soviet Union and its Party are teaching the peasants their social-political A.B.C.. You, the intellectuals, are

also impelled by something or somebody to feel the drama of your life "between the hammer and the anvil;" someone is initiating you too into the elements of the social-political A.B.C. and this somebody is certainly not myself.

In all countries, the peasantry, the millions of small proprietors, form a fertile soil for the growth of plunderers and parasites. Capitalism in all its villainy has sprung up from this soil. All the peasant's strength, all his gifts and abilities are absorbed by the care he bestows on his beggarly farm. The cultural idiocy of a small proprietor is precisely the same as the cultural idiocy of a millionaire. You intellectuals should have seen this fact, or sensed it somehow. The living conditions of the peasantry in Russia prior to the October Revolution were those of the XVII century. This is a fact which even the Russian emigrants, whose rage against the Soviet government has already assumed comical and monstrous proportions, will not dare to dispute.

The peasantry should not live like semi-savages of a low category; they should not form a prey for the cunning of the richer peasants, the landlords and the capitalists; they should not live under conditions of convict labour upon an exhausted land divided into minute strips, unable to feed even its beggarly illiterate owner who has no chance of fertilising his land, of working with machines and developing agriculture. The state peasantry should not be such as to justify the gloomy theory of Malthus, the foundations of which, in my opinion, conceal the fanaticism of the church. If the mass of peasantry is as yet unable to grasp the real degradation of its position, the working class must impress it with the consciousness thereof even by means of compulsion. There is no necessity for this, however, for the peasant of the Soviet Union, after enduring all the agony of the world slaughter of 1914-1918, was roused to life by the October Revolution; he is no longer a blind creature and has already learned how to think practically. He is being supplied with machinery and fertilisers; the doors

of all the schools are thrown open to him; every year, thousands of peasants' children are starting life as engineers, agronomists and physicians. The peasantry is beginning to grasp that the working class, embodied by its Party, is striving to create one master in the Soviet Union—a master with 160 million heads and 320 million hands, and this is an important fact which it is necessary for them to grasp. The peasants can see that everything which is being done in their country, is being done for all, and not merely for a small group of rich men; the peasants can see that what is going on in the Soviet Union is designed to serve their interests; that the 26 "scientific research institutes" in the country are busy finding means to increase the productivity of their lands and to facilitate their labour.

The peasants want to live not in the filthy villages which they were forced to inhabit for centuries, but in agricultural cities with good schools and nurseries for their children, and theatres, clubs, libraries and moving pictures for themselves. A thirst for knowledge and a taste for cultural life is growing up in the peasants. If the peasants had failed to understand all this, the work in the Soviet Union would never have been crowned by such magnificent results as have been achieved by the united efforts of the workers and peasants in the last fifteen years.

In the bourgeois countries the working people constitute a blind mechanical force, which cannot in the main realise the cultural importance of its labour. In your countries you have economic trusts, organisations of men who plunder the national forces, parasites on the toiling people. Fighting with each other, gambling with money in their efforts to ruin each other, they have staged dramas of fraud and deceit on the stock exchange until now at last their anarchy has brought the country to an unprecedented crisis. Millions of workers are suffering the pangs of hunger, the health of the people is

being wantonly ruined, infant mortality is swelling to disastrous proportions, the number of suicides is increasing, the original source of culture, its vital human energy, is being drained dry. And in spite of all this, your Senate has rejected La Follette-Costigan's bill for the assignment of 375 million dollars for immediate assistance to the unemployed, and the *New York American* publishes the following figures showing the evictions of unemployed persons in New York for non-payment of rent: during 1930, 153,731 evictions, during 1931, 198,738 evictions. Hundreds of families of unemployed were evicted daily in New York during January, 1932.

In the Union of the Soviets both the economy and the legislature are in the hands of the workers and of that part of the peasantry which has come to realise the necessity of destroying all private ownership of land, of socialising and mechanising the labour in the fields, and of themselves being regenerated psychologically into workers similar to those who are employed in the factories and works, *i.e.*, of becoming the true and only masters of their country. The number of collectivised peasants and Communists is growing daily. It will continue to grow at a still more rapid rate when we have a new generation which can outgrow the relics of serfdom and the superstition of secular slavery.

In the Union of the Soviets the laws originate from below, out of the depths of the toiling masses. They flow from the conditions of their active life. The Soviet government and the Party formulate and ratify as law nothing that has not matured in the process of labour of the workers and peasants—labour, the chief aim of which is to create a society of equal human beings. The Party is a dictator in so far as it is the organising centre, the nerve-brain centre of the toiling masses. The aim of the Party is to convert the maximum quantity of physical energy in the shortest possible time, in order to give vast scope and freedom to the development of the talents and abilities of each single one in the whole mass of the population.

A bourgeois state, which stakes everything on individualism, assiduously trains up its youth in the spirit of its interests and traditions. This is, of course, quite natural. But observe how anarchic ideas and theories have taken and still take their rise most of all from among the youth of this very bourgeois society. This is an unnatural phenomenon and is a proof of the abnormal and unsound state of an atmosphere where people are suffocating and beginning to dream of a total destruction of society in the interests of unlimited freedom of personality. You are well aware that your youth is not only dreaming such dreams but is also putting them into practice. The European press publishes more and more frequent reports about the "pranks" of the youth in both continents, of pranks that have the nature of crimes. These crimes are not the result of material want, but of "tedium of life," curiosity, search for "violent" sensations, and the basis of all such crimes is often enough an extremely low valuation of personality and of human life. The bourgeoisie absorbs into its ranks the most gifted descendants of the working and peasant masses, making them serve its own interests, and it boasts of the "ease" with which a man can attain "a certain personal prosperity," a convenient lair, a cozy den. But you will certainly not deny that thousands of gifted persons in your society fall and perish by the wayside on the road to this trivial prosperity, being unable to overcome the obstacles set in their way by the conditions of bourgeois life. The literature of Europe and America is full of descriptions of the futile ruin of gifted men. The history of the bourgeoisie is the history of its spiritual impoverishment. What are the talents of which it can be proud at the present time? It has nothing to be proud of save sundry Hitlers, save various pygmies suffering from megalomania.

The people of the Soviet Union are entering on an epoch of renaissance. The October Revolution roused tens of thousands of gifted men to vital activity, but they alone are not enough to realise all the aims of the working class. There are

no unemployed in the Union of the Soviets, and everywhere, in all fields of human energy, there is a dearth of forces, though these forces are being replenished more rapidly than has ever happened anywhere before.

You intellectuals, "masters of culture," should have understood that the working class, having taken political power into its own hands, will open before you the broadest opportunities for creative cultural work.

Observe what a stern lesson history has given to the Russian intelligentsia. They did not go hand in hand with their own working people and now they are decaying in impotent rage, rotting in emigration. Soon they will all be dead, leaving behind them the name of traitors.

The bourgeoisie is hostile to culture, and cannot help at present being hostile to it. Such is the truth, borne out by the facts in bourgeois countries, by the practice of capitalist states. The bourgeoisie rejected the Soviet Union's plan for universal disarmament, and this fact alone tells us sufficiently clearly that the capitalists are socially dangerous and are preparing a new world slaughter. They are keeping the Union of Soviets in a tense state of defence, forcing the working class to spend an enormous amount of precious time and materials on the production of weapons of defence against the capitalists. They are gathering their forces for an attack on the Soviet Union in order to make this vast country their colony and their market. The people of the Soviet Union are spending an enormous quantity of their forces and means for self defence against the capitalists of Europe, forces and means which could certainly have been employed with greater advantage for the cultural regeneration of mankind, for the work of construction in the Soviet Union has a world-wide importance for the whole of humanity.

Rotten bourgeois society, mad with hatred and panic fear for the future, is producing a rich crop of idiots, who absolutely fail to understand the meaning of what they are scream-

ing about. One of them appeals as follows to the "gentlemen rulers and diplomats of Europe:"

"At the present moment, the forces of the yellow race should be utilised by Europe as a means wherewith to smash the Third International." It is quite possible that this idiot was blurting out the dreams and intentions of similar "gentlemen diplomats and rulers." It is quite possible that there are already some "gentlemen" who are seriously contemplating what this idiot proclaimed at large. Europe and America are ruled by irresponsible "gentlemen." The events in India, China and Indo-China are quite sufficient to increase the racial hatred against the Europeans and the "white race" in general. It will be the third hatred, and you humanitarians should meditate a little whether you want it for yourselves, and for your children. And what will you gain by the preaching of "racial purity," by the racial hatred in Germany? Here is an instance of it.

"Saukel, the leader of Hitler's party in Thuringia, instructed the national-socialist group in Weimar to protest against the presence of Gerhardt Hauptman, Thomas Mann, Walter von Molo and the Sorbonne professor Henri Lichtenberge at the solemn celebration of the 100th anniversary of Goethe's death. Saukel accuses these people of non-Aryan origin."

It is time for you to decide on which side you are, "masters of culture." Are you for the unskilled labour force of culture, for the creation of new forms of life, or are you against this force, and for the preservation of the caste of irresponsible plunderers, the caste which is decaying from its head downwards and is continuing its existence only by inertia.

М. Горький: С КЕМ ВЫ, МАСТЕРА КУЛЬТУРЫ?

на английском языке

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